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ABSTRACT

A practicum project was developed to provide self-directed learning opportunities for all 10 members of a kindergarten enrichment group. Specifically, the project was implemented over a period of 10 weeks to help students gain independent work habits, to improve their care of materials, and to raise their reading ability by one grade level. Ten learning centers for individualized or small-group learning were organized to improve children's skills in reading, writing, spelling, and creative expression. Work contracts were used to guide the students and to evaluate their progress. A pretest and posttest were administered to assess increased learning; monitoring procedures and baseline data were used to assess growth in independent work habits and care of materials. All 10 children moved from preprimer to mastery of primer reading materials, markedly improved their work habits. and, with incentives withdrawn, continued to take better care of materials. Additional positive effects of the intervention were noted. It was concluded that, since the outcomes of the intervention were positive, the project can be recommended to other kindergarten classes. (Appended related materials include learning center worksheets and a six-item questionnaire for surveying kindergarten and first-grade teachers about the independent work habits of enrichment groups.) (Author/RH)

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NOVA UNIVERSITY

DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT LANGUAGE ART SKILLS WITH A KINDERGARTEN ENRICHMENT GROUP THROUGH LEARNING CENTERS

by

NANCY VARNER

A Practicum Report

Submitted to the Faculty of the Center of the Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Early Childhood Education.

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Nancy J. Varner

Abstract

Developing Independent Language Art Skills With a Kindergarten Enrichment Group Through Learning Centers.
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Descriptors: Academy Gifted/Early Childhood Education/Enrichment/ Gifted/High Achievement/Incentive/Individual Instruction/ Kindergarten/Language Arts/Learning Activities/Learning Centers/ Learning Contracts/Primary Education/Resource Centers

This report addresses the problem of providing self-directed activities for a kindergarten enrichment group. The project's aims were to help the enriched student in developing independent work habits, to improve in care of materials and to improve a level in reading.

Learning Centers were implemented during the language arts period to increase skills in reading, writing, spelling and creative expression. Work contracts were used to guide the students and to evaluate their progress. A pretest and posttest administered gave evidence of increased learning. Monitoring procedures and baseline data identified the growth in independent work habits and care of materials. Since the results of this practicum were in a positive nature, this model can be recommended to other kindergarten classes within the school or to other similar situations. The inclusion of this program will have implication for the overall pupil progress. (Appendices include identification of enrichment groups, charts to measure off-task behaviors, age graph of students, survey of teachers regarding work habits of enrichment group, samples of "work contracts," book report, and work sheets.)

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CHAPTER I

PURPOSE

Background Material

The setting for this practicum was an elementary school in a urban south Florida community. The community offers many opportunities for the children such as large shopping centers, many attractions of educational value, recreational facilities and public beaches. The climate lends itself to the year round use of these facilities. The families of this community range in socio-economic status from low to upper middle class. Most of the members are professionals or self-employed and are active participants in numerous civic and school functions.

The school population data for November 1981 as reported in the "Annual Report of School Progress" stated that there were 798 students enrolled. The ethnic composition was the following:

Category	Number	Percent
White non-Hispanic	506	63
Black non-Hispanic	261	33
Hispanic	25	3
Asia/Pacific Island	6	1

The attendance secretary reported that there are 789 students enrolled as of March 1982. The ethnic data shows a slight increase in Hispanic students from last year's totals. This enrollment is a composite of three neighborhoods. The attandance files indicate that 60% of the students come from the immediate neighborhood. A small percentage are transported from a nearby community which is similar in socio-economic background. This community had a rapid growth pattern which preceded the construction of the elementary school.

The remaining third come from an adjacent black community. They are transported into the population of the school as a result of a federal court desegregation ruling. Significant to the socio-economic status is that 98 students from this neighborhood receive free lunches. This verifies that 38% of the students received from this community are in families of low income range.

This neighborhood school encourages active parent and community involvement from all three neighborhoods. Volunteers, listeners, career speakers and talent sharing are types of active programs included in the present curriculum. Parent and civic organizations demonstrate a positive attitude in their contributions to the school's program. The parent association provides a varied and interesting cultural arts program throughout the school year. This enriches the school life of each student. This association promotes many fund-raising projects to purchase needed educational materials or equipment to enrich the children's curriculum.

Thirty classroom teachers and seventeen full or shared specialists compose the faculty of this kindergarten through fifth grade school. The members represent the white, black, and Hispanic ethnic groups. The majority have advanced degrees in education and have taught fifteen or more years. They are an informed and creative staff who cooperate and work together for the benefit of the students.

The implementation of the practicum occurred in a self-contained kindergarten classroom. Since many cutbacks in programs have affected the kindergarten, all instruction was provided by the classroom teacher. The counselor, media center specialist, compensatory education teacher and English as a Second Language (ESOL) teacher enrich or help the program.

The ethnic background of the 25 students represented in the class are 14 white, 6 black and 5 Hispanic. The parents of these students reflect the overall attitudes of the communities that compose this school. They are interested in their children's education, and they are eager to be involved.

Identification of Problem

In the description of the backgrounds of the students, it was indicated by this writer that many of the kindergarten students come to school with a wealth of information. There was evidence of parental interest and interaction with their children. A survey of the class indicated that twenty-one children attended a preschool program before entering kindergarten. Many of the students are nine to eleven months

older than the younger members of the class. These students are physically, mentally, emotionally and socially ready to learn at a faster pace.

At the beginning of the school year, each child was individually administered the Cooperative Preschool Inventory (CPI). This is a norm-referenced type of test which assesses the child on his body awareness, auditory directions, environment, quantitative perceptions, visual perceptions and motor skills. This test identified each student's developmental level. The child was then placed in one of three possible instructional strategies (Appendix A).

The problem in this practicum occured among the group in need of enrichment strategies. They had completed the kindergarten reading program (SWRL), and they were working in an enrichment series (Appendix B). When they had completed the assigned language arts tasks, it was necessary to redirect them to other activities. The results were disrupting to other members of the class.

The enrichment students were not using their time wisely and were wasting valuable time that could have increased their learning. The classroom teacher kept an observation check list for a week to monitor the number of interruptions made by the target group during the language arts period. The results indicated a need to improve work habits.

In analyzing the problem, the cultural backgrounds of these children could be a significant factor in their excelling.

Fisch and his colleagues (1976) did a study of seven-year-olds, and they found a correlation between superior parental social and educational background and superior intelligence of the children. Deutsch (1965) found that high frequencies of parent-child interaction will show good cognitive development.

Parental guidance was evident because each one of these students was involved in an activity which had parent participation. The enrichment students were the ones who shared their home experiences with the class. They were the ones chosen most often by their peers when the opportunity arose.

The findings in the study by Maddux and his colleagues (1981) indicate that the gifted tend to enter first grade when they are older. The younger-entering children are less likely to be labeled gifted. There was a significant correlation between this study and the age of the students in the target group. This relationship can be seen on the graph in Appendix C.

Education of today is concerned with mainstreaming the physically handicapped, the slow learner and the mentally retarded child into the classroom but very little attention is given to the education of the highly motivated. Witty (1971) states that the gifted child who, upon entering school, is exposed to unchallenging situations may soon become bored, restless and disruputive.

The indications were that the enrichment group needed to be challenged to explore and express themselves in a constructive manner. Guidance toward independent work habits would augment

the preparation for first grade. This self-directed program of independent work would perceive the uniqueness of each individual by involving many in varied activities.

To solve this problem necessitated a change in room management to develop independent work habits in a self-directing style. As a result, the ten students in the enrichment group would demonstrate increased learning in reading skills and would be less disruptive to other members of the class.

The survey in Appendix D was distributed to see if the problem existed in other kindergarten or first grade classrooms. After analyzing the results from six kindergarten, and six first grade teachers, the writer concluded that this problem did exist in kindergarten but not the latter part of the school year in first grade. There was evidence of parental interest and interaction in all classrooms. The majority of the teachers answered that they self-directed their students to other activities by assigning them enrichment tasks. Learning centers with contracts were used by two first grade teachers. Ten of the teachers stated that students in the enrichment group were not chronologically older than the other members of the class.

The reliability of this survey would have been more accurate if it had been conducted at the first of the school year. It was observed by the writer that when the enrichment group was mentioned, the teachers responded in a positive manner. This revealed that the teachers had established their classroom management styles and were partial to the enrichment group.

Major Objectives

Since the practicum was implemented at the end of the kindergarten year, it was important to consider the target group's transition to first grade. Members of the group are bright and have special gifts, but not all of them could be identified as gifted. They did excel in reading skills, were inquisitive and could be easily motivated. With the intervention of a new room management style, it was hoped that the target group would increase learning and develop independent work habits.

The following operational objectives were implemented to achieve the projected outcomes:

1) Over a period of ten weeks, the target group will improve 80% in independent work habits. The frequency of interruptions will be measured by baseline data gathered three consecutive days before, during the fifth week and at the conclusion of the practicum implementation.

2) Over a period of ten weeks, 80% of the target group will improve to primer level in reading. The results will be measured by a criterion test of reading skills (Reading Systems/Very Plain PP/P Level) to be administered before and after the implementation of the practicum.

3) Over a period of ten weeks, the target group will improve 80% in care of materials. The condition of the working area will be evaluated and measured by baseline data gathered three consecutive days before, during the fifth week and at the conclusion of the practicum implementation.

These terminal objectives aided the target group to work in a more structured, cognitive and self-directed environment. Pride and self-confidence in personal accomplishments were the

desired attitudinal outcomes. An early foundation of good work habits and care of materials are necessary tools that will help a student as he advances to the next grade.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH

Collection of Bibliographic Research

In researching the literature, the writer found various strategies that had been applied in self-directing to independent learning. One strategy is to recognize the student's learning style. Stewart (1981) states that gifted students differ in their preferred styles of learning from students of the general public. She administered the Learning Styles Inventory and the Norwicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale for Children to 300 fourth, fifth and sixth grade gifted/talented students and to 283 students from the general public. These samples included students from ten different school districts. The findings indicated that the gifted/talented preferred instruction methods that emphasized independence and the general population preferred more structural instructional methods.

Petreshene (1982) reports that students learn best by their modality strength. The Swassing-Barbe Modality Index was administered. Strengths in visual, auditory or kinesthetic

modality were recognized in a second grade classroom. The students were guided to independent activities by using their modality strength. Dunn (1978) finds that there is significant improvement in elementary students' achievement and motivation when learning and teaching styles are matched. This includes matching instructional resources to identified student characteristics.

Computer-assisted instruction is another strategy that has been used. Many educators agree that a fourth basic skill of computer literacy will be added to reading, writing and arithmetic. Demshock and Riedesel (1968) state that computer-assisted instruction could individualize spelling instruction. The sixth graders involved were divided into three levels of achievement. Each level had an experimental group and a control group. The former used the CAI program "Spell" and the latter received conventional instruction. The posttest, after fifteen weeks, indicated no significant overall differences between the two treatments. The students accepted the computer-assisted instruction despite some hardware problems, and it was possible to detect the mode by which individual students learned best.

Computer-assisted instruction in the elementary schools is a new adventure in individualizing education. Research is limited but all indications point to an enormous potential that has developed in the last five years. Alan Kay (1977), chief scientist at Atari, first proposed the concept of a "dynabook".

This is a small book-sized electronic device with a display screen and a small touch-sensitive typewriter keyboard that can be used by students. Carter (1982) describes the day of an elementary student in 1991 using this device. Assignments, schedules, drills and all subjects are received by plugging in and receiving information on the "dynabook". The author was projecting into the future, but all technologies described are available and under development at the Xerox Pala Alto Research Center. The "future" depends upon how schools and communities respond to these new technologies as the cost declines.

Feldhausen (1981) reports that success in meeting the needs of the gifted, creative, talented and high ability children can be met to some degree in the regular classroom. The development of learning centers and individualized learning materials is the beginning. Placement of children in the appropriate level is the next step. The operational tool is a "Learning Agreement". This agreement correlates with a master chart which is posted for the week. Materials and planning were responsible for the success of this self disciplined approach to classroom management.

Switzer and Nourse (1979) find in their study that the classroom should provide rich and varied experience which will increase learning ability for the gifted. The study discusses the role of the first grade teacher in implementing a reading program for the gifted child. Their report indicates that instruction must be individualized and designed to stimulate

thinking, capitalize on talents and capture interest. The study concludes that gifted readers are often neglected, special instruction practices are necessary, and limited information is available to aid the teacher in planning.

Price (1976) reports that, from a sampling of gifted children, there is the suggestion that parents of these children see their children as having a persistent drive and a compulsion to learn at an early age. Questionnaires were submitted to these parents pertaining to their children's preschool reading experiences. The sampling included thirty-seven students in fourth, fifth and sixth grade. Of these students, twenty-eight were reading when they entered first grade. Twenty-one used the methods of phonics and sight words combined when they were taught to read. The majority of these children walked and talked early. Four of the students had been kept at home by parents and were older when they entered school. There was strong evidence that reading to a child at an early age can provide an opportunity for the child's own intelligence to go to work on reading.

Dunn (1971) finds that individualization of instruction through the development of contracts is a teaching technique that can be successful even with young, non-reading students. Graduate students diagnosed a pre-kindergarten or pre-first grade student for whom an individual contract was to be written. The children chosen were fifty-seven nonreaders, inexperienced with either contracts or independent learning. The directions to the child were recorded on a cassette tape and follow-up activities

were developed. Over half of the students worked quietly for 30 to 90 minutes. The indications are, that in time, with patient guidance, experience and encouragement, young students may be able to learn independently.

Choice of Strategy

In selecting a solution strategy from the various alternatives, the writer recognized that individualization of the enrichment group was significant. An individualized approach permits the students to work at their own paces and to work on their unique learning needs. Stewart (1981) states that the gifted/talented students prefer an independent learning style.

Computer-assisted education was one alternative that could individualize education. Demshock and Riedesel (1968) confirm this in spelling instruction which consists of drill and practice. Computers can be used as creative resource to help students explore and learn independently. Computers can help students think and understand concepts at a much earlier age. The initial cost of equipment and training time can be negative factors in implementing this alternative.

Feldhausen (1981) finds that learning centers with individualized materials can be successful. This process shifts responsibilities and decisions to each member of the group. This strategy can be a multilevel process of receiving and expressing information in a self-directing style. The activities can be developed to meet the needs and strengths of each student in a stimulating and enjoyable manner. Cost will depend upon the

commercial materials available and the teacher-made materials necessary to implement the program. To initiate this strategy would involve detailed planning and organization.

Switzer and Nourse (1979) caution not to neglect the gifted readers, but to foster an environment that is creative, challenging and enriching. This does not mean to add more of the same kind of materials and activities to the student's program. It does mean that the enriched child would need access to a great variety of new learning situations, materials and activities to give him depth and range of educational experiences.

The writer recognized that cognitive learning is important but affective learning is equally important. Dunn (1978) and Petreshene (1982) recognizes that children succeed in learning when their modality strengths and activities are matched.

Dunn (1971) and Feldhausen (1981) found that contracts or agreements with the students are a necessary ingredient to put into operation individualized learning. Contracts give guidance and record the tasks accomplished.

Considering the alternatives, the writer implemented the strategy of language arts learning centers as a solution to the problem. Influencing factors in this decision were the elements of cost, time, materials and available resources. The centers individualized the target group. The centers introduced new concepts and reinforced learned concepts to increase cognitive development. The centers were open-ended to develop and stimulate creativity. Visual, auditory and kinesthetic

activities provided various modality styles to increase learning in reading skills.

The writer had to consider room arrangement and appropriate materials which would be vital in implementing this program. A search of appropriate learning activities to increase reading skills was necessary. Kindergarten and first grade teachers had to be consulted in locating appropriate activities and instructional aids. The media specialist was consulted about visual and auditory materials that were implemented. Parent volunteers were utilized in developing materials.

All the mentioned resources were available. Now the writer had to organize and coordinate the resources for an effective implementation.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Initial Procedure

To create an effective program of enriched learning centers during the language arts period, the writer had to understand the needs of the enrichment group and then incorporate these needs into the implementation process. The RS/VP preprimer and primer level pretests were administered individually to the ten students. These provided the writer with evidence of the reading skills needed. The results supplied a list of initial and final consonant sounds, vowel sounds and vocabulary to be included when analysing and compiling materials for the centers.

Then baseline data was gathered to define the frequency of interruptions of the target group during the language arts period. This covered a period of forty minutes. The results supplied evidence to define the growth of independent work habits. This data was gathered at the midpoint and conclusion of the project. The results will be discussed later in this report.

Finally, parent volunteers and fifth grade students were asked to supervise and check various centers. Two parents and three fifth grade students were trained and participated during the ten weeks of implementation.

Organization of Centers

The major ingredient in the practicum were the learning centers. That is where the involvement occurred. Increasing skills in reading were the main focus. Therefore, all activities at the learning centers were related to reading, writing, spelling and creative expression. Decoding items and exposure to preprimer and primer level Dolch Words were stressed. The centers offered reinforcement by actively involving the students. The materials available in each center were designed to challenge the enrichment group.

Since implementation occurred during the morning language arts period, the writer involved the target group in teacher-directed activity first. After completing the activity, the group received a follow-up assignment and a "work contract". On the contract they marked two centers to attend for enrichment. The centers were identified by letters. Forty minutes were allocated for these tasks.

Ten centers were included for small group or individualized learning; therefore, each student participated in two centers a day. The centers were named after vowels and consonants sounds to reinforce these skills. Letter People from

Alpha Time were used to label each center. Ten "Work Contracts" (Appendix E) were designed by the writer; therefore, a new contract was used each week.

On the following pages is a description of each center which was designed to stimulate, reinforce learning and extend interest.

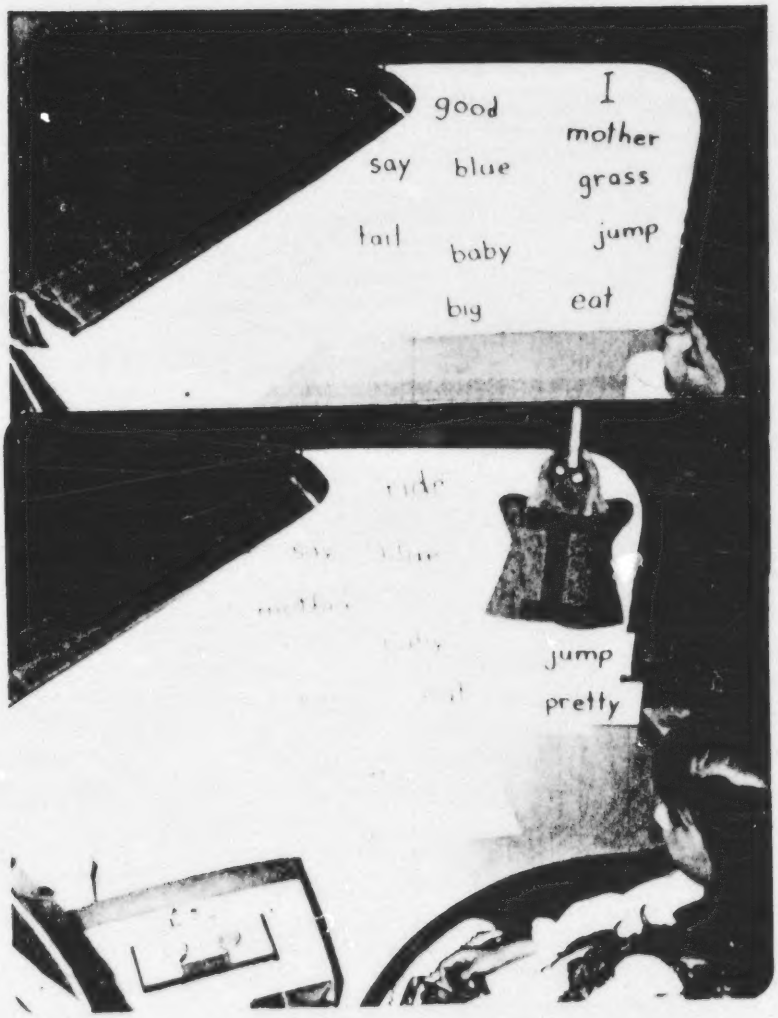
Center A: Writing

The center used material from Class Action, Writing by Miriam Park Gruwell. This was an easy to use center-designed activity which combined writing, reading and art in one lesson (Appendix F). The student reproduced the illustration and copied the easy sentence. Coloring and creative additions to the drawing were encouraged.

Center E: Word Sramble

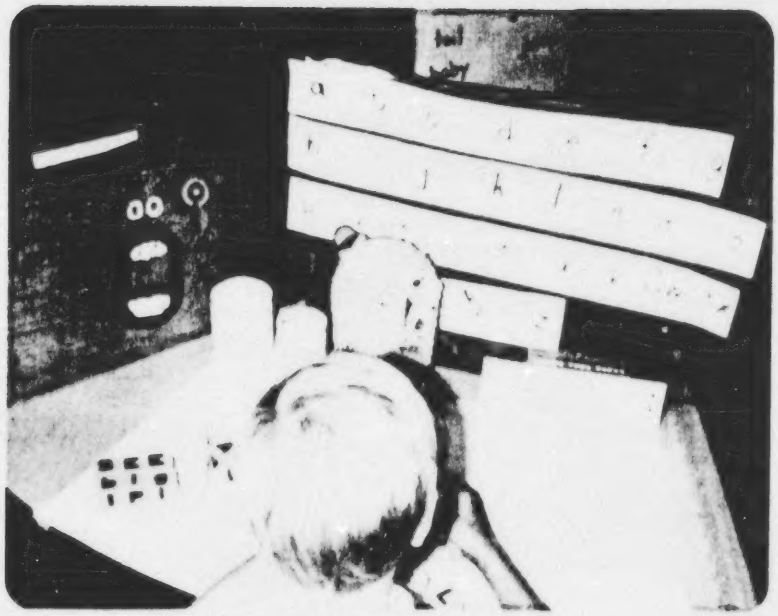
This center used original work sheets designed by the writer (Appendix G). The format was designed to correspond with the theme of the week. Spelling words were listed at the top and letters of each word were mixed at the bottom on theme pictures. The object was to unscramble the letters and write words. Manipulative letter blocks were also available.

Center I: Filmloop



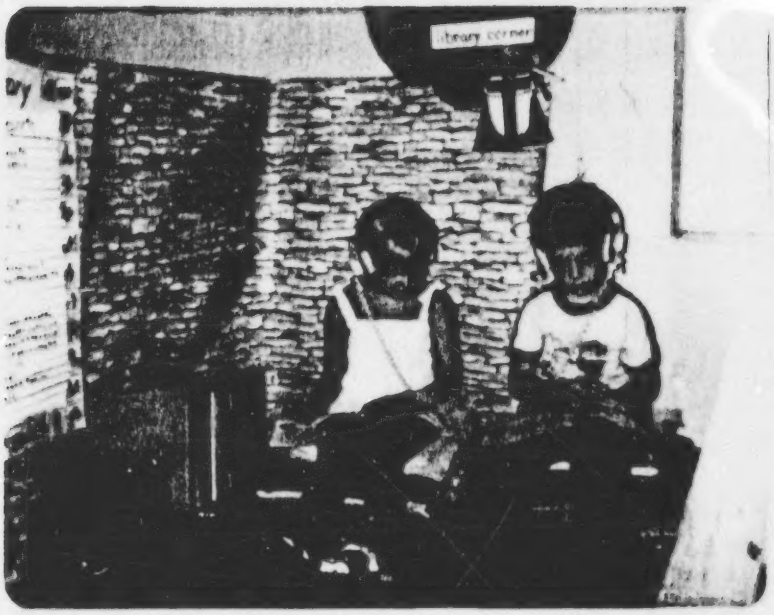
A filmloop projector was operated by the students. It displayed a subject that was related to the theme of the week. Related words were attached to the center divider. Each user was to illustrate and write a simple sentence about the projected story.

Center O: Word Puzzles



The first six weeks crossword puzzles were used from the See Saw Book Club and My Puzzle Book by Marguerite P. Dolch and Lillian Ostrofsky. The last four weeks original work sheets were designed by the writer (Appendix H). This involved finding listed words in a box of letters. Spelling words from the Dolch list were used. A volunteer was needed to correct and reinforce concepts.

Center T: Library



This center involved looking and listening to a story on tape. Then a library book was checked out by signing a card and placing it in the correct file. A book report (Appendix I) was taken home to be completed. An oral presentation of the report was made during morning share time.

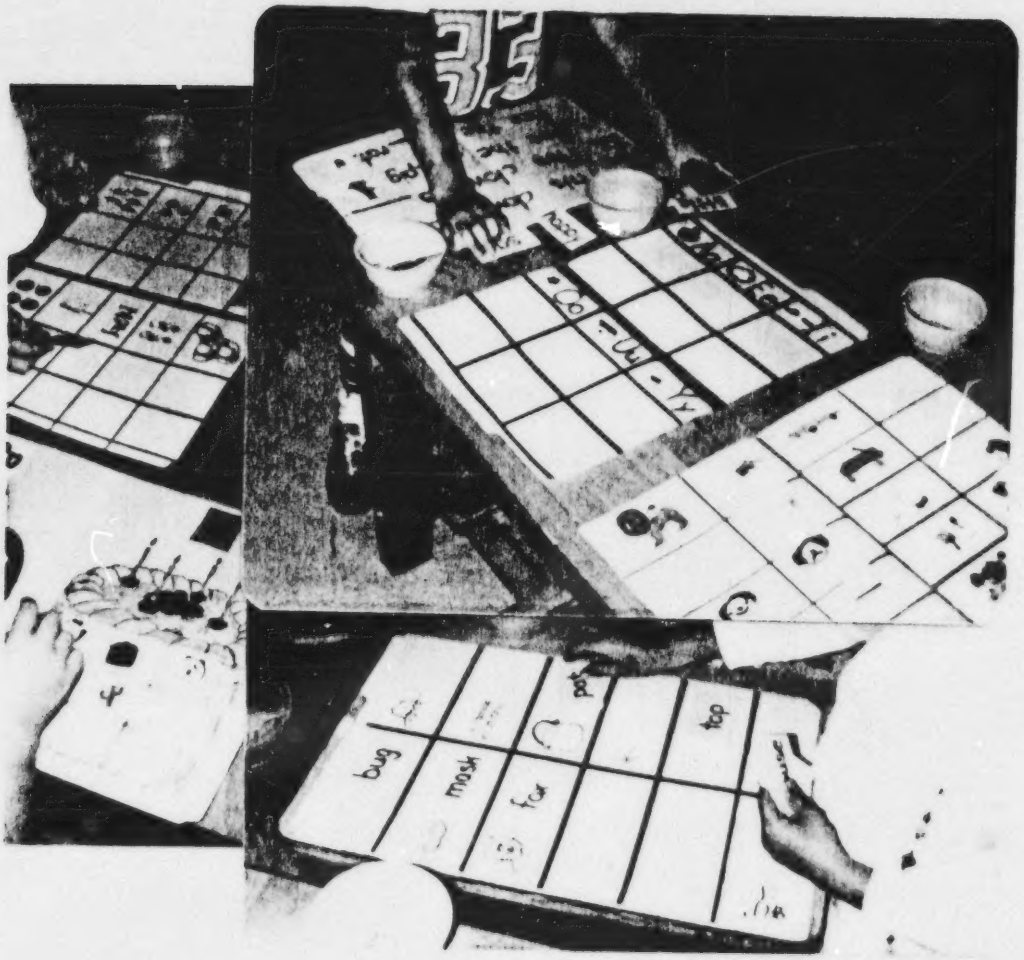
Center L: Listening

Reading readiness tapes from Ideal were used. These involved listening, classification, beginning sounds, writing and rhymning words. Worksheets accompanied each lesson and were used simultaneously with the tape.

Center F: Creative Art

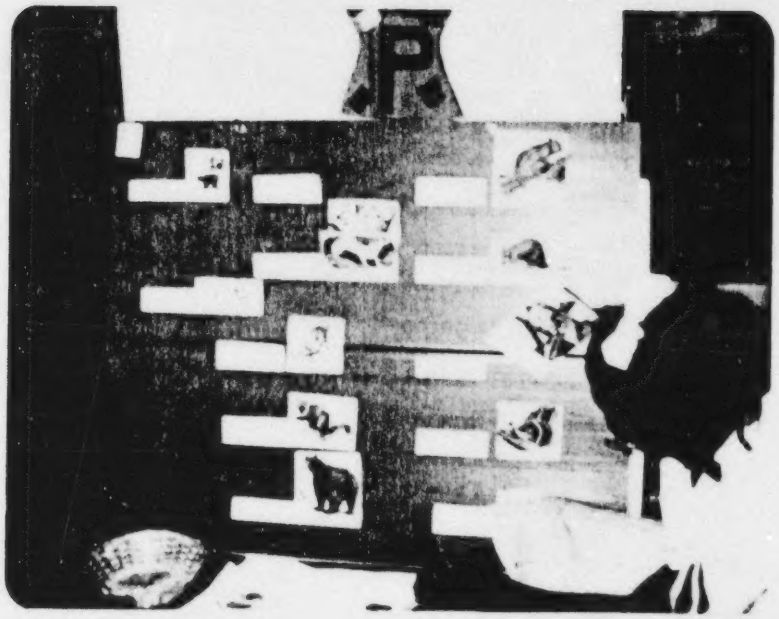
Ideas from Class Action, Creative Art **by Miriam Park** Gruwell were used the first six weeks. An example was placed in the center for copying. The art projects were easy to create and original added touches were encouraged. Making pictures and words with rice and seeds were the art projects for the seventh and eighth week of implementation. The ninth and tenth week the activity was changed to painting and dictating a sentence about the picture. A volunteer helper was used at this center.

Center B: Manila Folder Workjobs



These were activities created by the writer to reinforce skills learned in reading assignments. The skills covered were beginning, middle, ending sounds, rhymning words, plurals, blends and other concepts. A volunteer was needed to check each completed activity. Four workjobs were required to complete center.

Center P: Matching



This center involved matching pictures to words. These were teacher made cards using familiar nouns or action verbs. A volunteer had to check for correct matches.

Center U: Helper

The center was originally used as a flash card center. Two members of the enriched group worked together. The last five weeks a member of the enriched group helped a lower reading level student. This consisted of flashing vocabulary or listening to a reading assignment.

First Week Procedures

During the first week many important tasks had to be performed in organizing the program. On the first day of the project, a discussion with the enrichment group occurred during the reading period. The operational procedures of the learning centers were explained. The "Work Contracts" were distributed and an explanation of how to use them and where to file the written assignments were demonstrated.

Then a walk through activity occurred. Each student took their contract, marked two centers of their choice and became actively involved. Supervision was necessary to instill correct behavior and movement from center to center.

A decision to assess the folders twice a week was implemented. This took place during active center time in the afternoon on Wednesday and Friday. This had a two-fold purpose. First, it monitored the effectiveness of the centers and gave an indication of necessary changes. Second, it was a means of evaluating the work and to prevent the students from reinforcing incorrect associations.

Finally, baseline data was gathered to define the care of materials in the learning centers. The data collected indicated that materials were left on the floor and not replaced in appropriate places. During the second week off-task behaviors were pinpointed and methods of modifying them were discussed. An incentive of extra time in a fun center (sand, blocks or painting) was offered if care of materials were demonstrated.

Data was gathered on the fifth weeks and at this time the incentive was eliminated. Finally, data was gathered on the ninth week and recorded. The results will be discussed later in the report, but there was a definite improvement which continued through the completion of the implementation.

Problems Encountered

Since this practicum was implemented at the end of the school year, several difficulties were encountered. As each arose a solution was quickly decided and the implementation proceeded as planned.

The first problem was the presentation of a new room management style with the enrichment group. The first week did not operate as smoothly as had been anticipated. There was confusion, excitement and haste in completing the activities. To solve this problem a meeting was held at the conclusion of the language arts period each day to discuss what was happening. By the second week operational procedures began to work more smoothly.

During the fourth week of implementation the kindergarten participated in the National Standardization Program for the Stanford Early School Achievement Test (SESAT). The purpose of the program was to obtain national norms and related technical data on the new editions of the Stanford Achievement Test series. The language arts period had to be moved to an afternoon time. By this time the enrichment group enjoyed the involvement and

participation in the centers and easily adjusted to the time change.

By the fifth week parents were asking questions about the "Work Contracts" and asking what was going on that had their children all enthused. At this point meetings were held to explain the program to the parents. In implementing the program again the orientation of the parents should be included in the initial procedures.

The final problem was providing for the groups not included in the project. For documentation of specific behaviors, it was necessary that they were isolated from the specitic centers. Four of the nonparticipating members attended English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and four other members attended Compensatory Education during this time period. Therefore, games and other activities were provided for the remaining group of eight when they completed their assigned tasks. Those participating in the project radiated enthusiasm and interest which was catching to the average students. Midway through the ten weeks they were anxious to participate. This prompted the writer to incorporate a few similar centers for them to use. By the end of the project the low group started to become interested but with the conclusion of the school year near, centers were not made available for them to use.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Method

The evaluation procedures were the responsibility of the writer. The results were measured by the stated objectives. The enrichment group in kindergarten was identified by their scores on the Cooperative Preschool Inventory (CPI) and the successful completion of the SWRL Reading Program. Since this involved a change in room management, the following three outcomes were desired: increased learning, independent work habits and care of materials. The cognitive results were measured after an intensified exposure to the preprimer and primer reading skills in the learning centers. The attitudial outcomes were measured by baseline data gathered and through monitoring devices on a weekly basis.

Cognitive Growth

The instrument for measuring the cognitive growth was Reading Systems/Very Plain (RS/VP) preprimer and primer level.

The results of this criterion reference pretest were compared to the posttest. The criterion for mastery in decoding was 100% with the exception of the Oral Word List posttest on which one error was permitted. In the stated objectives the writer had projected that the outcome would be successful if 80% of the target group would improve to primer level in reading. The following chart representation of that data indicates an increased learning pattern.

NUMBER OF ERRORS IN PRETEST AND POSTTEST

Student	Oral Words (PP/P)		Decoding Sounds initial		final		vowels	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Sara	13	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Diane	16	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Mandy	20	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Sandy	21	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Jason	25	0	0	0	1	0	3	0
Rebecca	28	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Jeff	32	1	0	0	3	0	3	0
Sonja	32	0	0	0	1	0	4	0
Billy	32	1	1	0	0	0	3	0
Brent	33	0	1	0	0	0	2	0

As can be seen by the chart, all ten members of the enrichment group not only mastered the preprimer level, but met the criterion for having mastered the primer level as well. This indicates a 100% gain in growth and a successful outcome since the original objective was to improve to primer level.

Independent Work Habits

Since the enrichment group needed to assume some responsibility for their own learning, learning centers were established during the language arts period. "Work Contracts" were developed to guide and monitor the procedures. The desired result was to develop independent work habits. The first off-task behavior measured the frequency of interruptions during the language arts period. Data was gathered for three days before the implementation of the practicum. The chart illustrates the information that was collected.

	Number of Interruptions			
	1st day	2nd day	3rd day	average
Teacher-directed group	10	9	7	9
Table work group	13	8	9	10
Other group	14	9	9	11

The data gathered indicated that there was a need to establish appropriate work habits.

Data was gathered and charted again during the fifth week of implementation.

	Number of Interruptions			
	1st day	2nd day	3rd day	average
Teacher-directed group	1	1	1	1
Table work group	4	2	3	3
Other group	3	2	1	2

The collected data revealed that the members of the enrichment group were working more independently. The centers were filling a need and providing more than a minimum of required work. Incentives were being awarded each Friday if all centers were completed. This was a means of evaluating and keeping a record on their contract folders. Good work stickers were placed on the folder if tasks were accomplished. Working at their own pace plus praise and encouragement gave them a feeling of success.

The final data was gathered the tenth and final week of implementation.

	Number of Interruptions			
	1st day	2nd day	3rd day	average
Teacher-directed group	0	0	0	0
Table work group	1	0	1	2/3
Other group	0	0	0	0

As can be observed on the chart, the target group was now working independently. They had become totally involved and many did not want to stop the activities after the allotted time. They had set their own pace and were not in competition with other members of the group. Success was being experienced. Enjoyment of the challenging activities and making decisions were resulting in learning.

Care of Materials

A second off-task behavior measured was how the target group took care of the materials used in the centers. Data was gathered for three days. There was no mention of keeping the centers clean or in appropriate order. The purpose was to pinpoint the off-task behaviors and discuss ways of modifying them with the target group. The unacceptable behaviors that were noted and discussed are the following: pencils and crayons not put in containers; cards or other equipment not put in appropriate places; scrap paper left on table or floor; library books not placed on shelf; chairs not placed under tables; "Work Contract" left at centers and not filed in proper place.

After discussing these off-task behaviors an incentive of participating in a special treat (extra time in blocks, sand or easel painting) was offered if care of materials was demonstrated. The off-task behaviors were observed again on the fifth week. A minus indicated that the center was not in order.

Centers

	A	E	I	O	U	T	L	F	B	P
Day 1				-				-		
Day 2				-		-				
Day 3								-		

The chart illustrates that the target group improved in taking care of materials. In three days, they left five centers disarranged. This indicated that 83-1/3% of the centers were left in an orderly manner.

After the fifth week the incentive was eliminated. On the ninth week the off-tasks behaviors were observed and evaluated again. There was just a slight change in pattern of behavior as indicated on the chart.

Centers

	A	E	I	O	U	T	L	F	B	P
Day 1				-		-		-		
Day 2				-		-				
Day 3								-		

The target group was aware that materials should be kept in appropriate places, but the areas of cut, paste and library needed to be watched. The projected outcome was successful because there was an 80% improvement in the care of materials without an incentive.

Positive Side Effects

The three major objectives were successfully attained and the procedures expanded the curriculum for the enrichment group. Positive attitudes and reactions to the learning centers and work contracts were evident. Each Monday the students were anxious to receive new contracts and attend the center activities. These activities spread the children throughout the room, and they were all actively participating in various types of activities. This provided the writer more time to work with the lower groups in their reading skills.

Another positive side effect was the parent interest. A majority of the parents favored the use of centers and contracts.

They had noted the interest and enthusiasm that the students were displaying at home. These parents had noticed a significant gain in their reading skills. The children were exploring and developing new reading interests at home.

Finally, kindergarten teachers in the same building recognized the value of centers to reinforce skills during the language arts period. Three other teachers in the kindergarten building set up similar learning centers for their classes. They asked to use the worksheets and other materials developed for the practicum. One teacher designed similar contracts and she found them successful with her enriched group.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the results of the practicum were effective and the evaluation proved to be positive, then learning centers will be expanded to other reading groups next year. This will entail precise organization and a complete change in teaching strategy to accomplish individualization of the language arts program. The following topics should be considered before the implementation.

Involvement of Students

If the desired goals of learning centers and work contracts are to be accomplished, the writer recommends that the first nine weeks of kindergarten should be an evaluation period and a time to establish routines and performance criteria. The beginning concept skills should be developed. Once the structure is clearly understood by the students, they will feel confortable, perform more confidently within the atmosphere and be ready to accept more responsibility. Praise and approval will promote a positive learning atmosphere.

After the setting is established, then introduce the enrichment group to learning centers and work contracts. Gradually other students can be included as they reach the level of participation. The members in the first group will be given the opportunities to have roles of leadership and responsibilities when they demonstrate the operational procedures of the contracts and centers. The important factors to remember are to proceed slowly and to be firm about center limitations.

Organization of Centers

Gathering or making materials in sequential order is important for the success of the program. It is time consuming but the rewards reaped in the end results are worth the time and effort. It is recommended that the materials should be related to the objectives being taught. The centers should be designed by breaking the language arts skills into short lessons thus designing them for the individual needs of the students. Be sure materials are at the levels of the students and are designed for reinforcement or exploration. If the materials are too difficult or the use is not clear then disturbances and problems will occur.

Involvement of Parents

Parental involvement through written or oral communication is highly recommended. Acceptance of a new classroom management style can be easy if the parents can observe and participate in

the process. If the students are happily involved and learning, then they can project their enthusiastic participation to their parents. This will provoke interest and assistance from parents. It is amazing how many are willing to work if once asked. For those who cannot particpiate at school then newsletters are a means of communication. Help may come in a different form.

Other Settings

Positive results in this report indicate that other kindergarten teachers, media specialists and teachers of exceptional students could benefit by this plan of action since language arts activities are a necessary part of each program. By individualizing and self directing students in these programs, the strength and needs of each student will be met. The writer can share plans and documents to implement this program in an effective manner. Therefore, the solution of the problem can be transported within the grade level or to similar situations within the school or county.

Learning centers and contracts can invite students into the mainstream of learning in a least restricting manner. Their use are recommended if alternative ways of developing the same concepts are needed to increase learning. This method of learning will have educational significance if the user applies the information learned from the centers to other situations.

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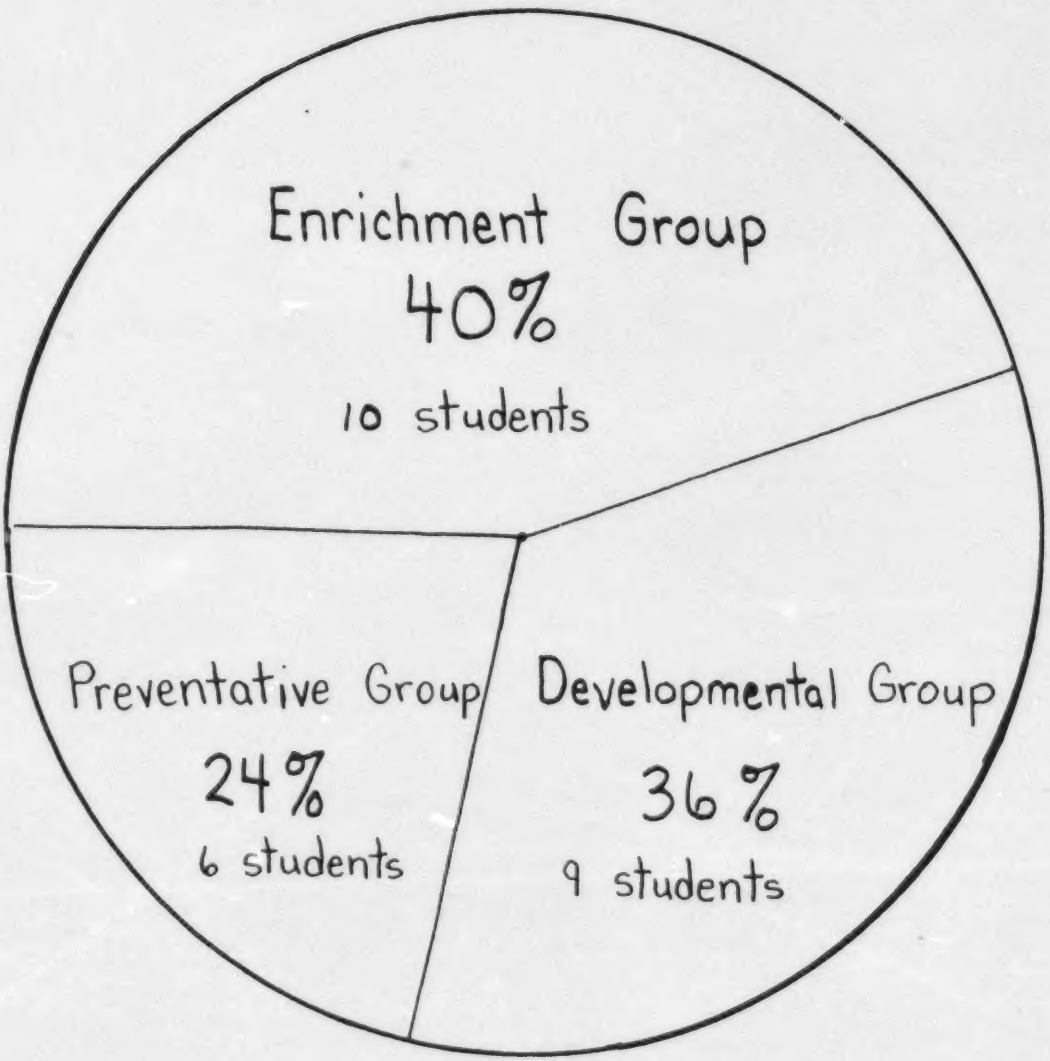
APPENDIX A

RESULTS OF CPI ASSESSMENT



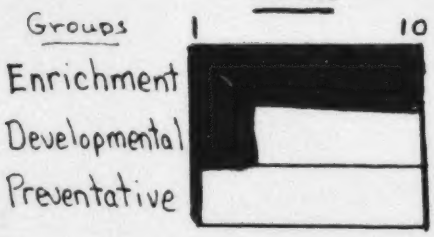
APPENDIX B

RECORD OF READING PROGRESS

Reading Levels at Implementation in March

SWRL Beginning Reading Program

SWRL Enrichment Program



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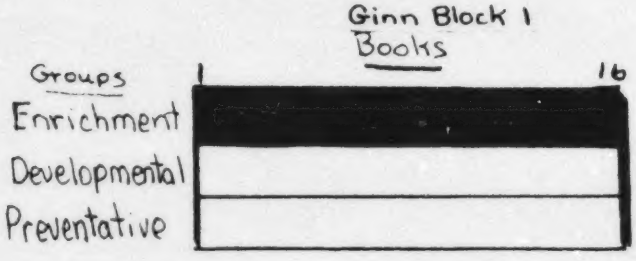

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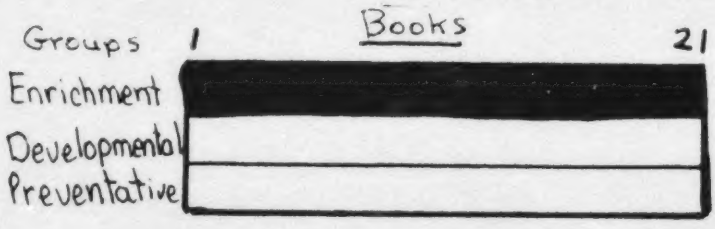

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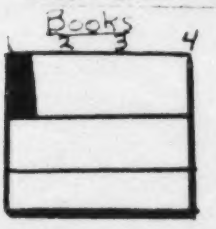
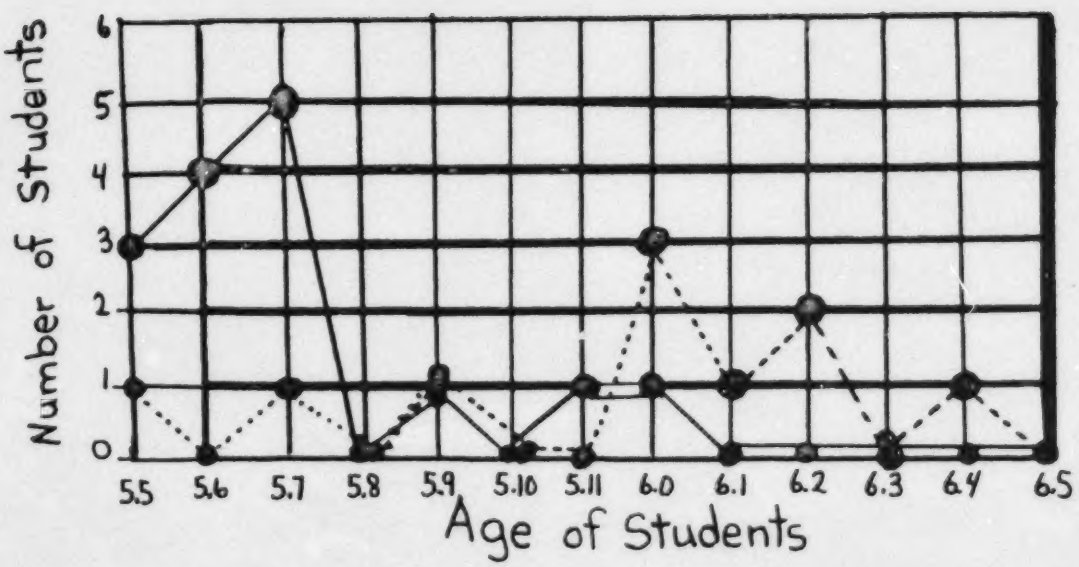


APPENDIX C

AGE GRAPH OF STUDENTS



..... Enrichment Group of Students

— Other Groups of Students

APPENDIX D

Survey of Kindergarten and First Grade Teachers

Subject: Enrichment Group and Independent Work Habits

1. Have your students developed independent work habits? ____ yes ____ no

2. When their assigned tasks are completed, are they disruptive in class? ____ yes ____ no

3. When tasks are completed, how does room management provide for their needs?
   a) individualized activities ____ c) learning centers ____
   b) enrichment ____ d) other ____

4. How do you self-direct students to other activities?
   a) assigned tasks ____ c) chart system ____
   b) contracts ____ d) other ____

5. Are these students chronologically older than the other members of your class? ____ yes ____ no

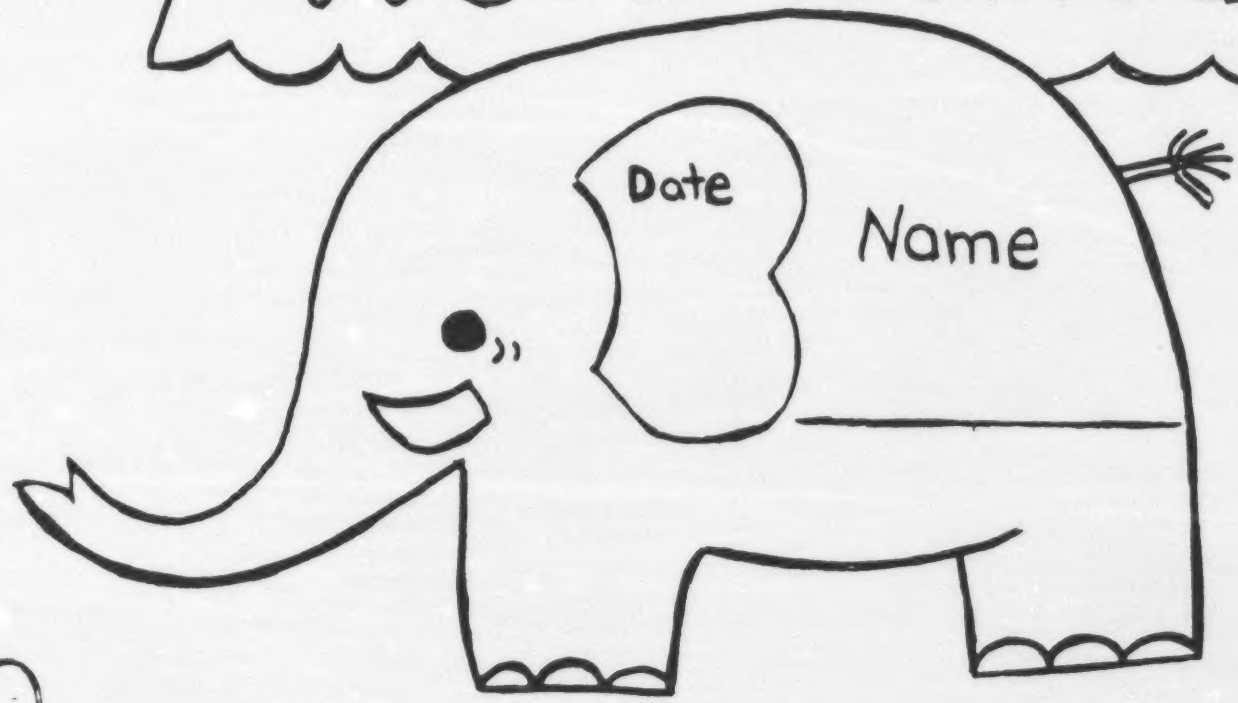
6. Is there evidence of parental interest and interaction with this group of students?

   ____ yes ____ no

APPENDIX E

A "Work Contract" for Each Week of Implementation

Work Contract



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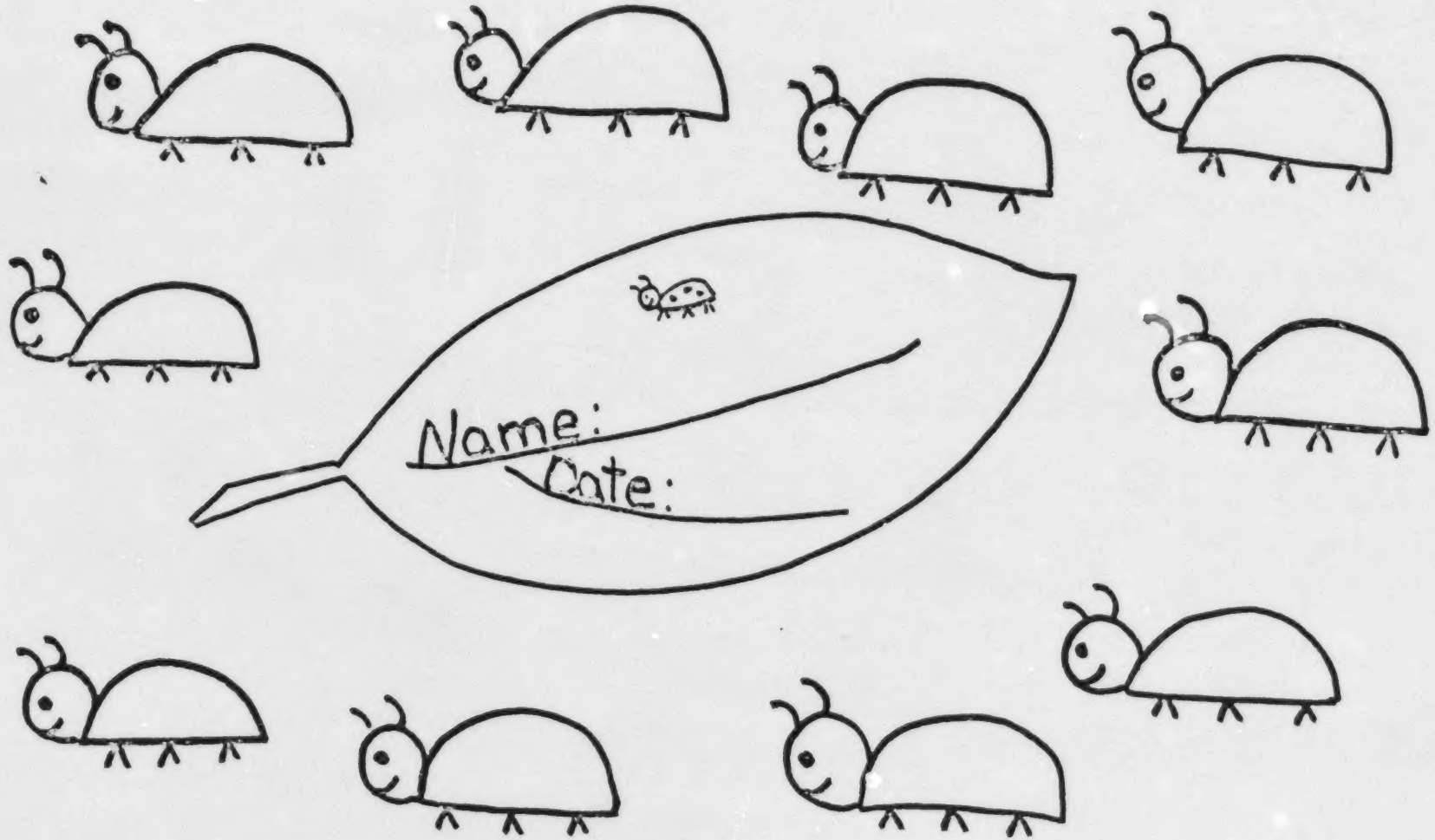
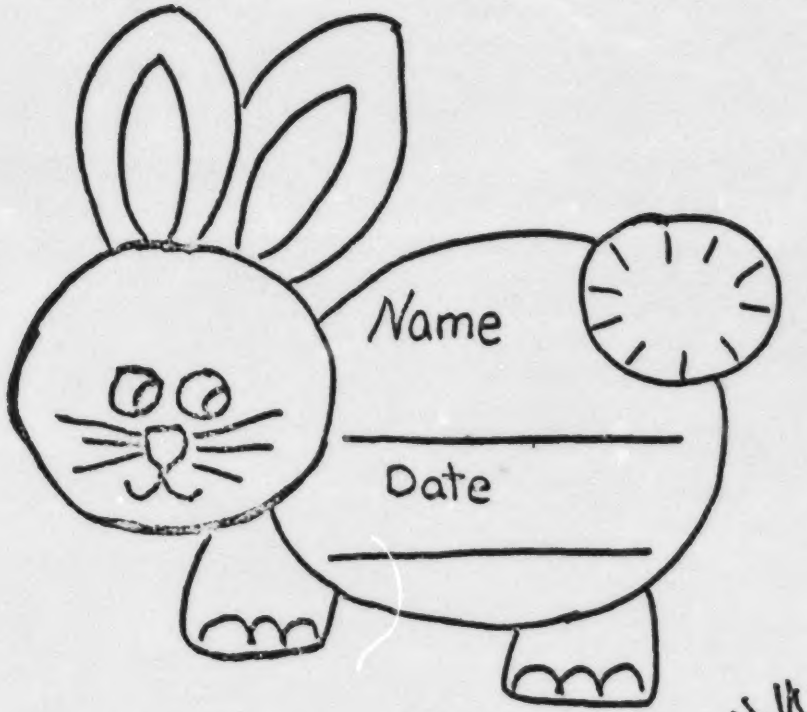
Work Contract
Name
Date
A
E
I
U
O
H
F
P
B
L

Work Contract



Work Contract



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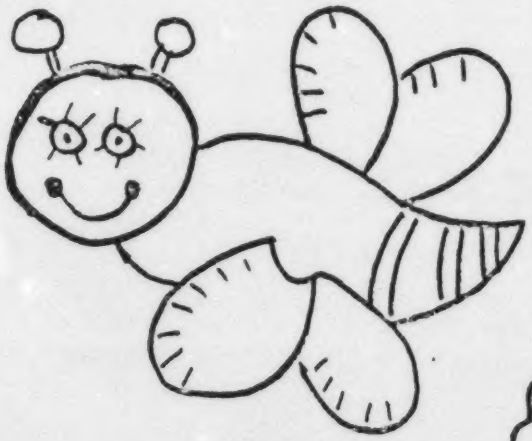
Work Contract



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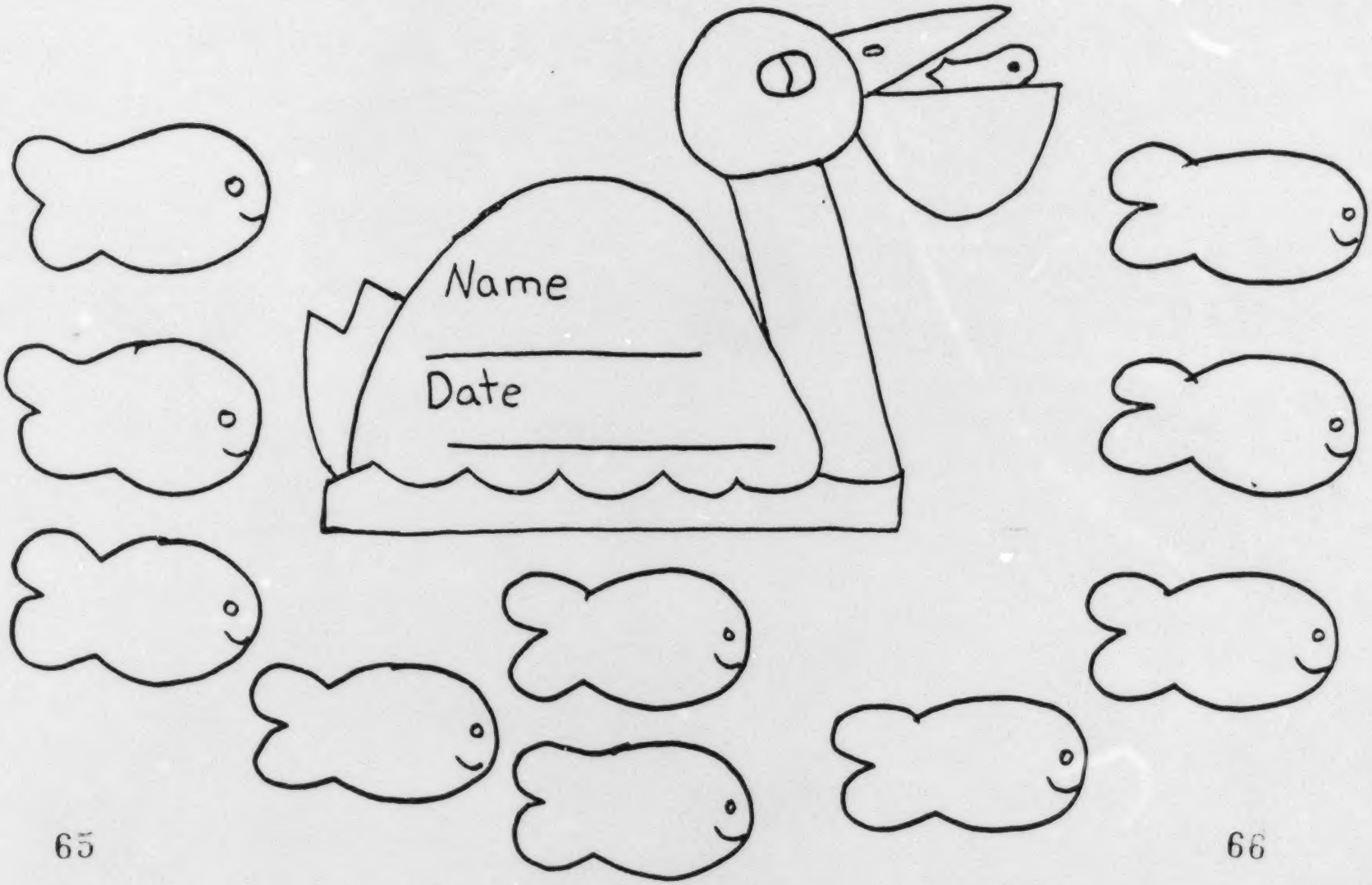

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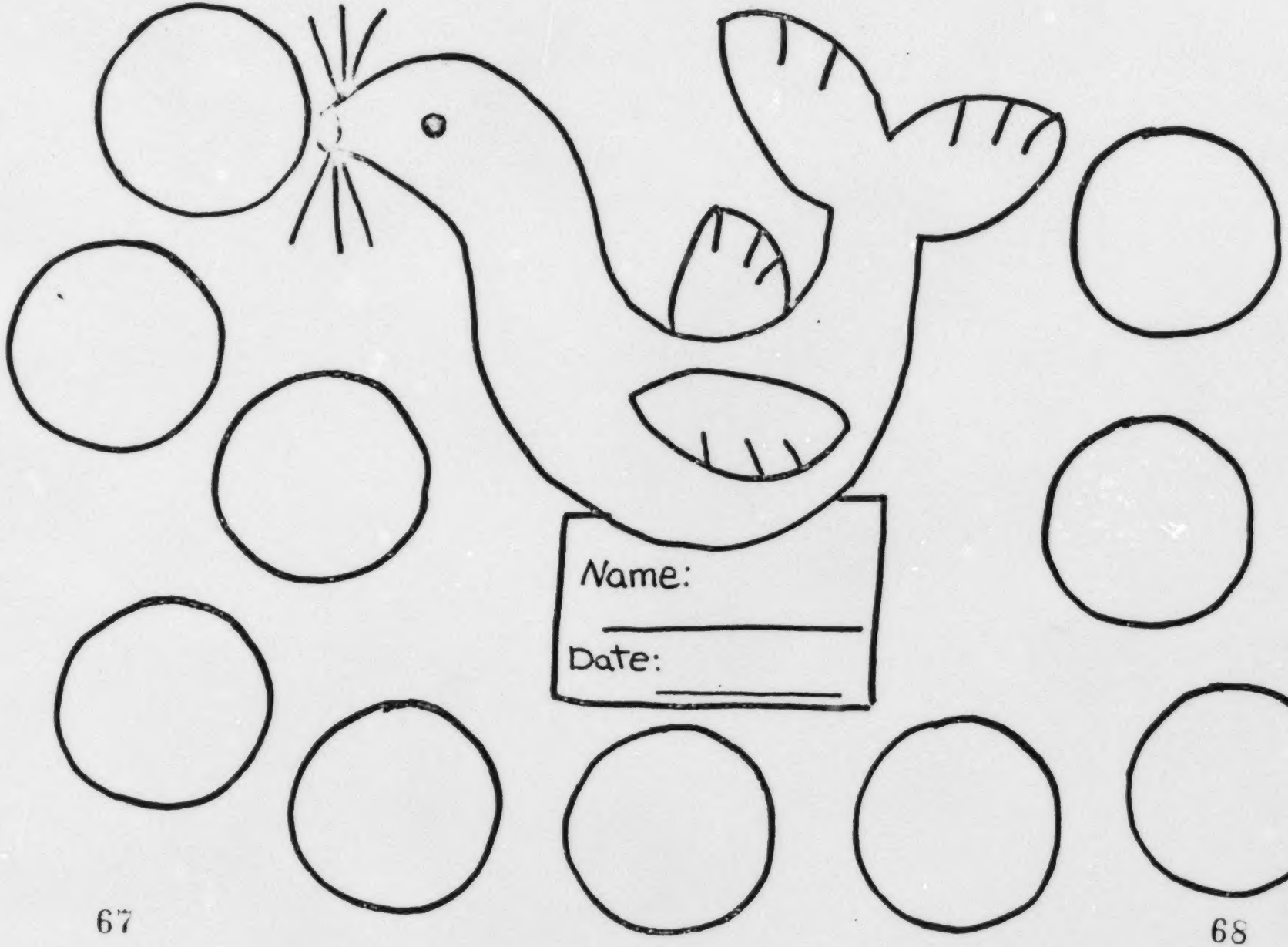

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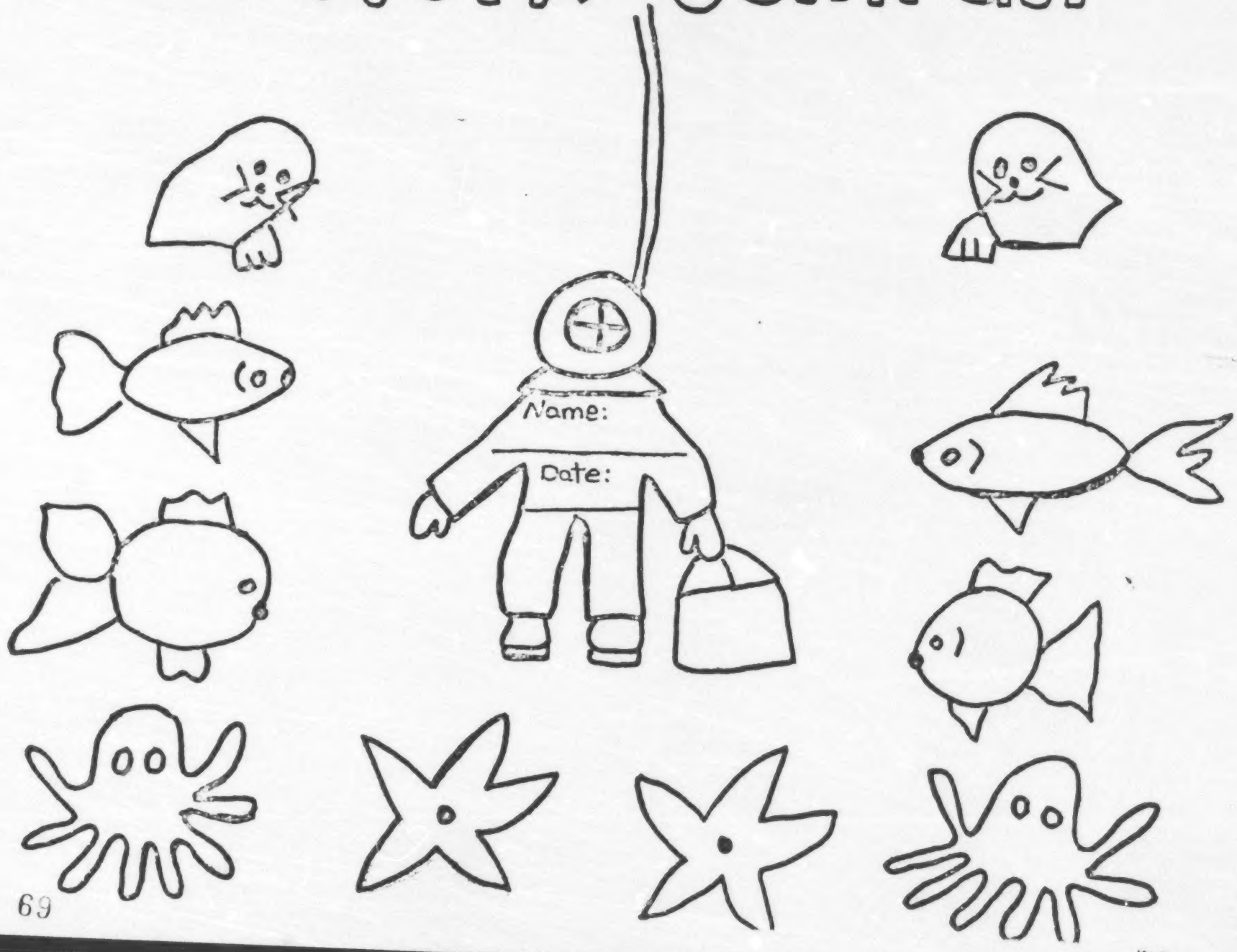

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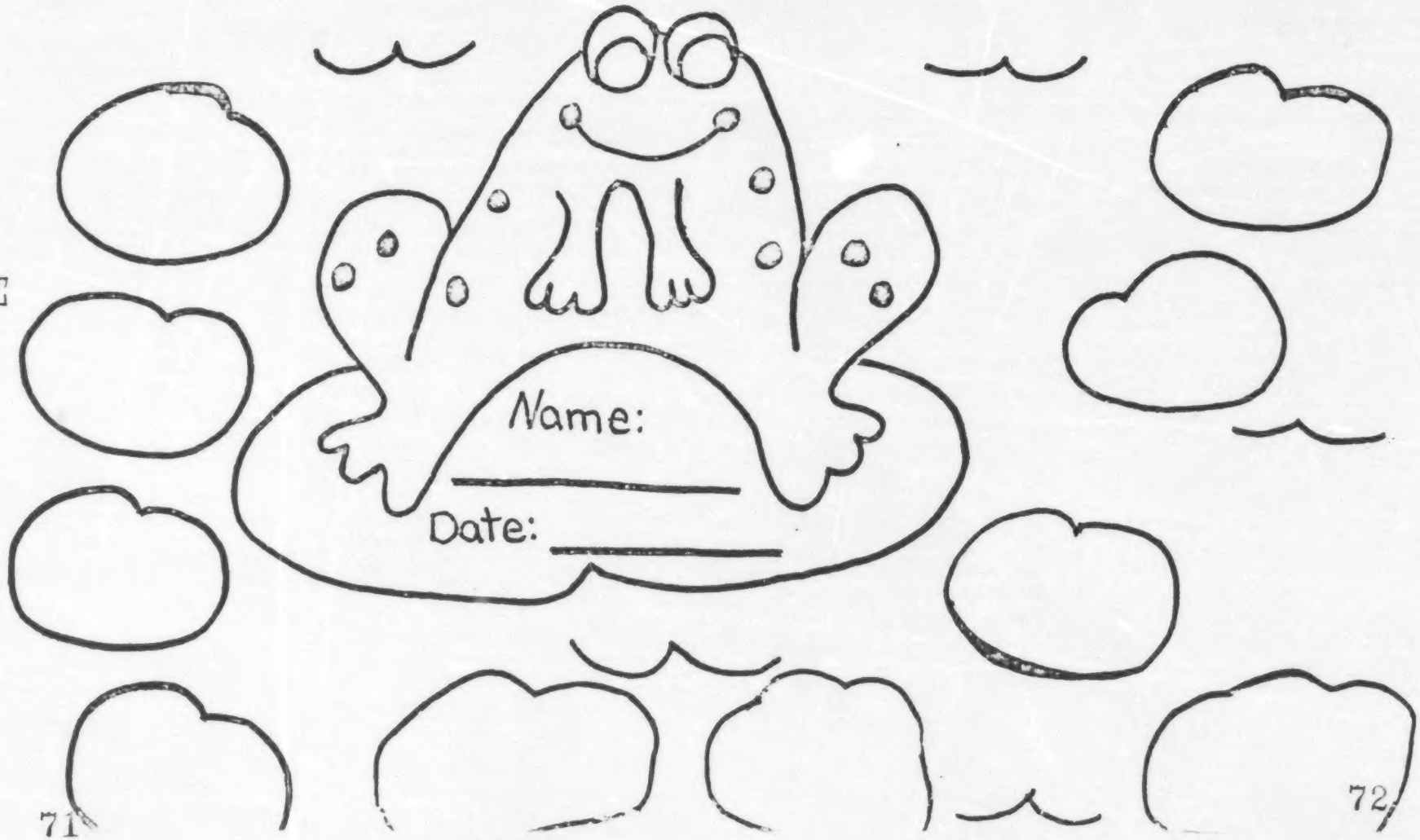

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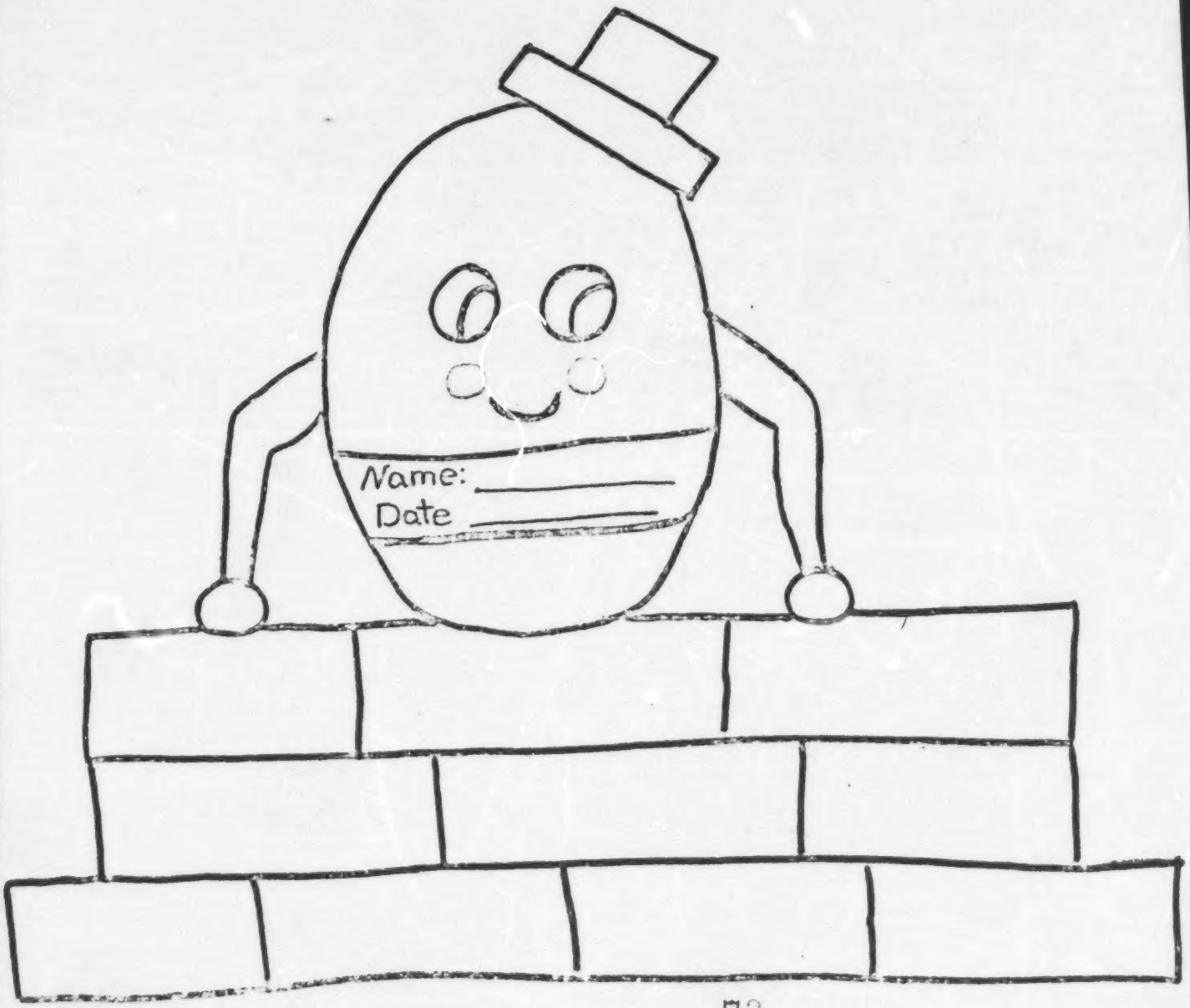


APPENDIX F

Sample Writing Lesson

An octopus lives in the ocean.

APPENDIX G

"Word Scramble" Worksheets

Word Scramble

Name _____ Date _____

can	yellow
pretty	ride
she	the

Can you see the words?

anc	_ _ _
hte	_ _ _
deir	_ _ _ _
hes	_ _ _
ytrper	_ _ _ _ _ _
lowyel	_ _ _ _ _ _

Word Scramble

Name _____ Date _____

big	for
brown	jump
dog	saw

Make some words!

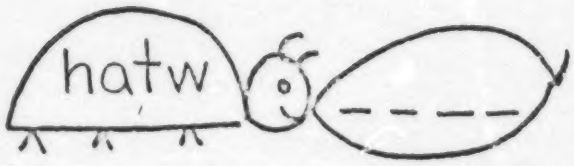
ofr	_ _ _
mjup	_ _ _ _
nrowb	_ _ _ _ _
ogd	_ _ _
aws	_ _ _
igb	_ _ _

Word Scramble

Name _____ Date _____

what	see	will	funny
good	I	say	pretty
do	you	brown	ride

Find the words!

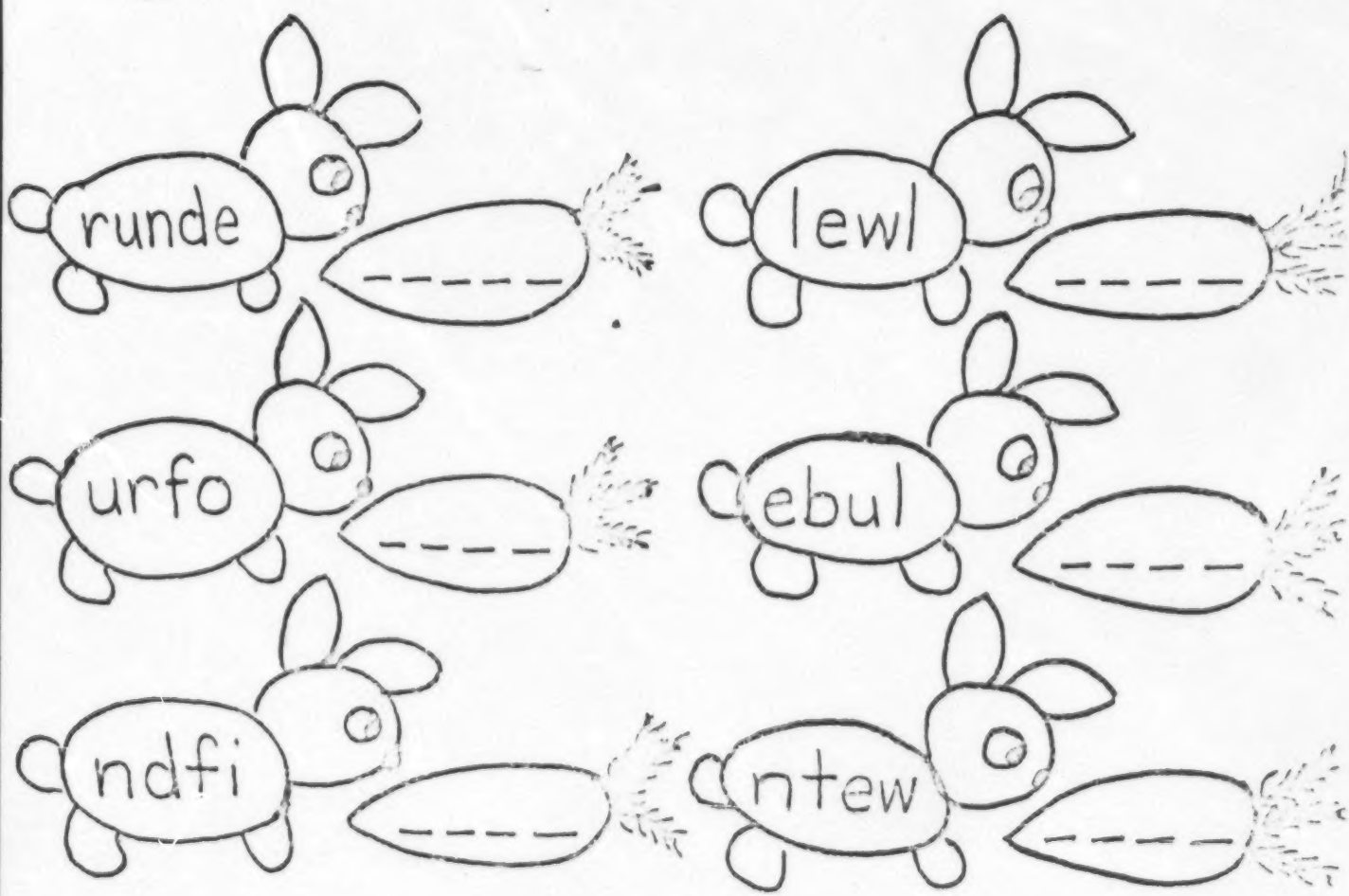


Word Scramble

Name _____ Date _____

under	went	one	say
well	find	blue	eat
four	it	good	you

Look for the words!



Word Scramble

Name _____ Date _____

two	funny	come
go	red	us
into	with	am

wot - - -

Word Scramble

Name _____ Date _____

new	for	ride
please	help	eat
soon	my	saw
down	are	went

Find the words!

ym ___

era ____

orf ____

wen ____

noso ____

selpae _____

nowd ____

drie ____

plhe ____

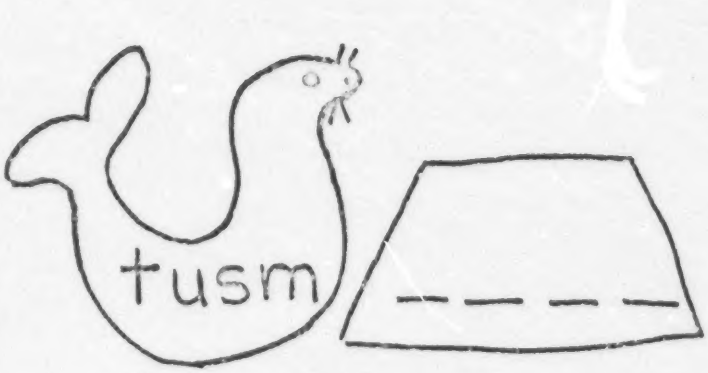
twen ____

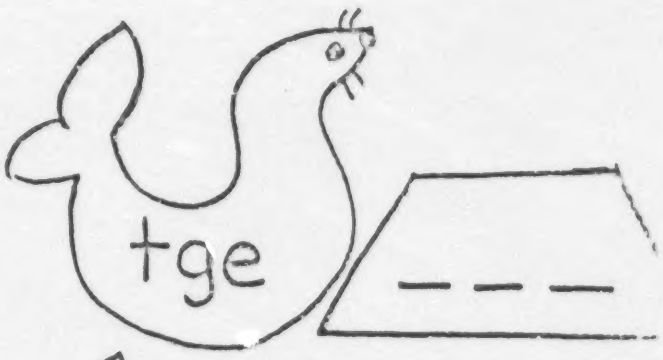
Word Scramble

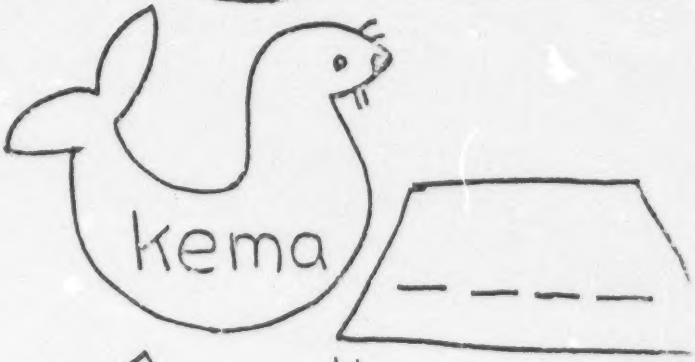
Name _____ Date _____

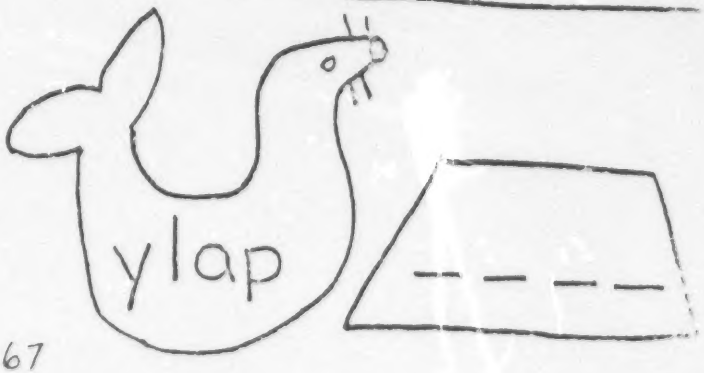
snap	make	little
help	find	must
him	come	play
get	want	ran

Can you write the words?







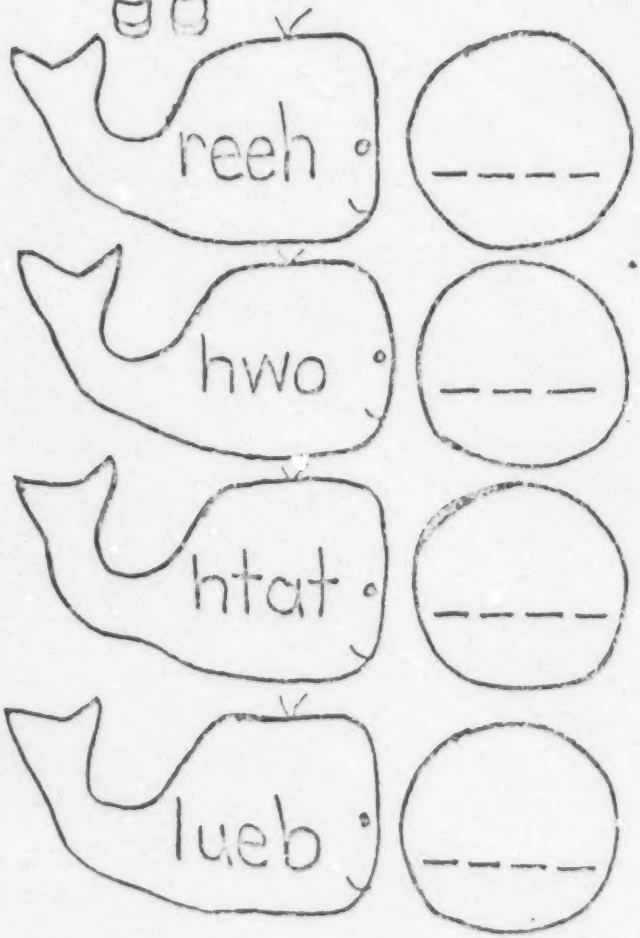


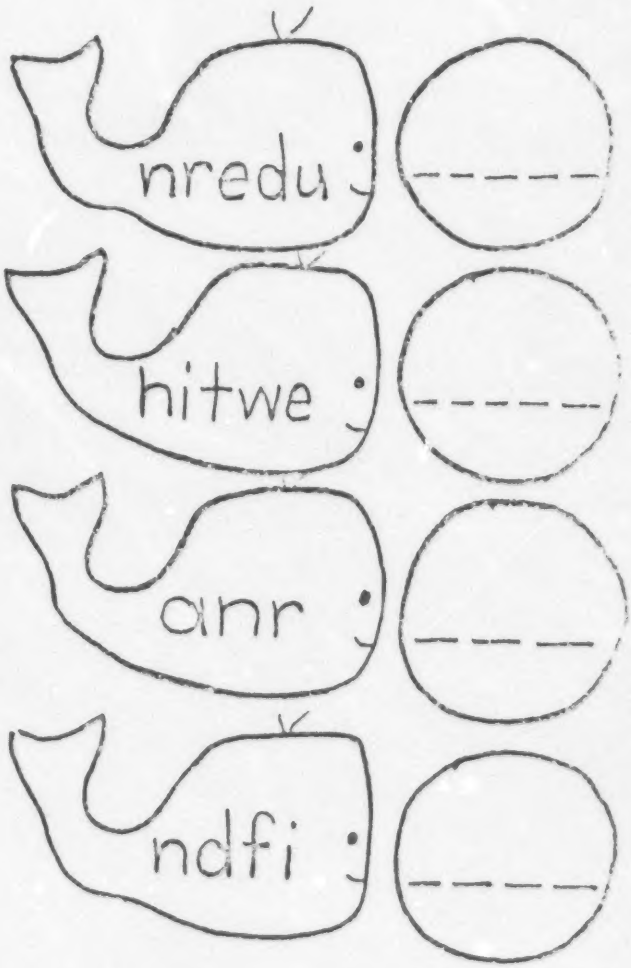
Word Scramble

Name _____ Date _____

that	who	one	under
white	me	here	went
ran	be	blue	find

Can you find the words?





Word Scramble

Name _____ Date _____

away	ate	now
like		there
where	get	into

Can you make some words?

egt ____

eerht ____

own ____

tnoi ____

yawa ____

keil ____

eta ____

eerhw ____

Word Scramble

Name _____ Date _____

our	so	came
have	all	they
three		out

Can you make a word?

lal ___

tuo ___

hyte ____

aemc ____

ruo ___

heret _____

os __

veha ____

APPENDIX H

"Find the Word" Worksheets

Find the Words

Name _____ Date _____

make
find
come
want

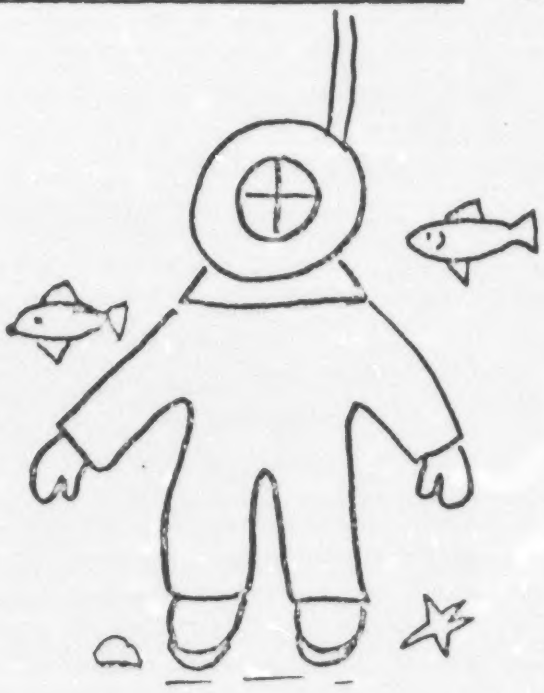
little
must
play
ran

c	l	i	t	t	l	e	a
o	r	a	p	l	a	y	f
m	a	k	e	b	h	g	i
e	n	m	u	s	t	e	n
w	a	n	t	c	d	f	d

Find the Words

Name _____ Date _____

new
please
soon
my



down
for
help
are

p	l	e	a	s	e
l	f	o	r	i	m
e	g	n	e	w	y
h	d	o	w	n	b
s	o	o	n	a	c

Find the Words

Name _____ Date _____

ate
away
like
where

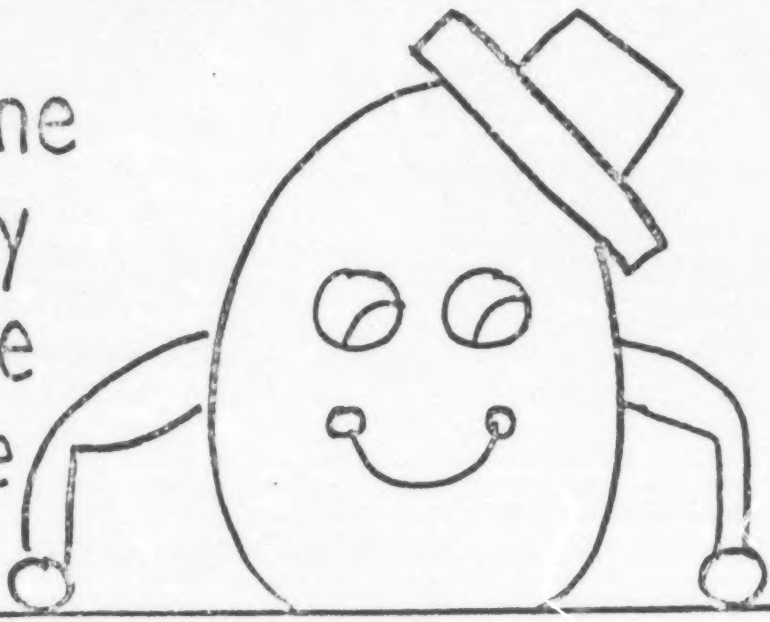
now
there
into
get

l	*	n	*	*	*
i	*	o	g	e	t
k	a	w	a	y	h
e	*	*	a	*	e
*	i	n	t	o	r
*	w	h	e	r	e

Find the Words

Name _____ Date _____

came
they
have
three

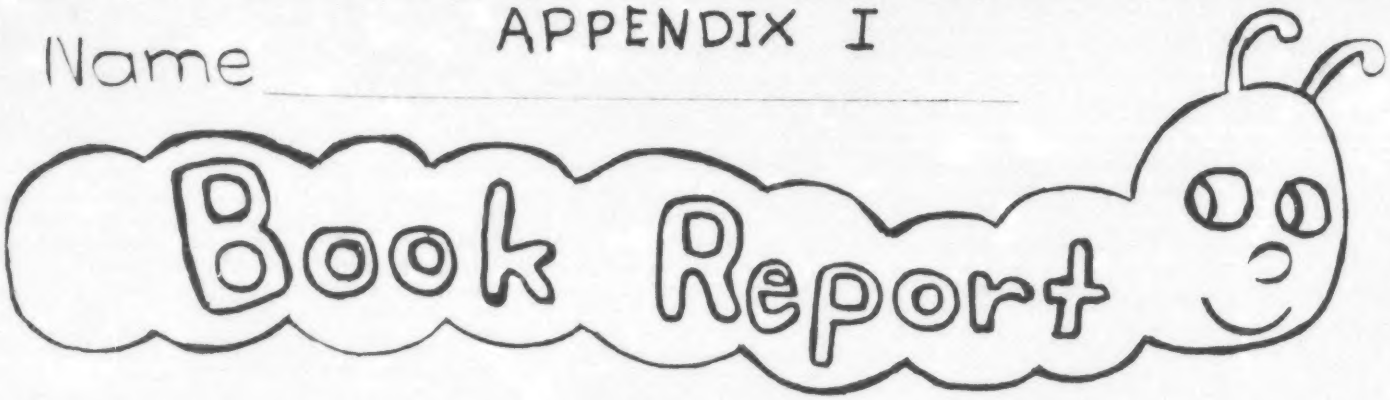


our
all
so
out

t	h	r	e	e
h	a	l	l	a
e	v	s	b	c
y	e	o	u	r
o	u	t	d	e
f	c	a	m	e

APPENDIX I

Name _____



Name of book: _____

What did you like best about the story?

_____

_____

_____

Please draw a picture about the story.

Did you find spelling words in the story?

1. 4. 7.

2. 5. 8.

3. 6.